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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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23 April 1967

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Although the level of enemy-initiated activities remained low, allied forces over the weekend launched several search and destroy operations to seek out main force enemy units.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Three battalion or larger operations in I Corps have been launched to mitigate the build-up of enemy units in that corps area (Paras. 3-4). In III Corps a 17-battalion operation covers the boundaries of the provinces of Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong (Para. 2). Enemy main forces in III Corps appear to be refurbishing their force structure (Paras. 5-11). The security of Route 20--an important road linking the cities of Da Lat and Saigon--has improved somewhat over the last several months (Paras. 12-16).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

Criticism of the government has highlighted the current congress of South Vietnam's largest labor union (Paras. 1-2).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: SEA DRAGON operations sink 11 North Vietnamese craft. In the air, one MIG-21 was brought down in an encounter with US aircraft (Paras. 1-4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Over the weekend four battalion or larger operations were launched by allied forces in South Vietnam.

2. The largest, involving 15 US Army battalions and two ARVN battalions, is Operation MANHATTEN--a search and destroy action centered 35 miles northwest of Saigon. In Phases I and II of this operation US/ARVN forces will sweep an area from the Boi Loi Woods to the Saigon River, and in Phase III allied forces will make a detailed search of the Saigon River and its tributaries from Ben Suc north to Dau Tieng. Approximately 2,500 VC/NVA troops are reportedly located within a six-mile radius of the operational area. The operation is presently scheduled to last 18 days.

3. What started out on 20 April as a multi-platoon engagement between US Marine and VC/NVA troops in an area of Quang Tin Province--about 30 miles south of Da Nang--has developed into a six-battalion operation named UNION. Participating in the operation are three US Marine and three ARVN battalions. Friendly losses to date in this operation have been 46 killed and 104 wounded in contrast to 96 enemy killed.

4. Two operations--BEACON STAR and SHAWNEE--were initiated in Thua Thien Province on 21 April. BEACON STAR is being conducted by a US Marine battalion landing team approximately 12 miles north of Hue, whereas the latter operation combines three US Marine and three ARVN battalions in a search and destroy operation eight miles west of Hue. While there has been no enemy contact to date in Operation BEACON STAR, contact with VC/NVA in SHAWNEE has resulted in 27 enemy

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killed in contrast to friendly losses of only two wounded. Operation SHAWNEE is expected to have a duration of ten days and has opposing it an estimated three to six enemy battalions.

Enemy Main Forces in III Corps

5. Since US forces inflicted heavy losses on Viet Cong (VC)/North Vietnamese Army (NVA) main force units in III Corps during Operation JUNCTION CITY, enemy units in the area have avoided significant contact with allied forces. They appear to be refurbishing their force structure.

6. The 9th VC Division--composed of the 271st VC, 272nd VC, and 101st NVA regiments--bore the brunt of the 2,700 casualties suffered by the Communists during Phases I and II of JUNCTION CITY.

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sonnel of the 52nd NVA Regiment--previously subordinate to the 7th NVA Division--had, even before the JUNCTION CITY engagements, begun to reinforce the 9th Division. In view of the heavy losses suffered by the 9th, continued reinforcement by the 52nd Regiment is probable.

7. The 273rd VC Regiment--an independent unit subordinate to the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN)--has been located in southern Binh Long Province since 20 March. Its continued location in this area may indicate that until the 9th Division's losses have been replaced the 273rd will not return to its former area of operations, War Zone D.

8. In Northern III Corps, no changes have been detected in the disposition of the 7th NVA Division or its two located subordinates, the 165th NVA and 141st NVA regiments. These units will probably continue to evade contact with strong allied forces while seeking opportunities to harass lines of communication (LOC), friendly outposts, and possibly attempting to thwart Revolutionary Development (RD) programs.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Infiltration passes captured during February and March in Phuoc Tuy Province indicate the probable arrival of personnel of the 101 C NVA Regiment, and possibly an infiltration group designated 722, as reinforcements for the 5th Division. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] had indicated that the 5th was to be reinforced, but it is not yet clear if a third regiment has been established or if the new personnel are replacements for existing units. The 5th Division may have needed additional replacements as the result of its 1966 losses.

[REDACTED] 101 C Regiment was disbanded to reinforce the 32nd, 88th, and 95 B NVA regiments in the western highlands. It is possible that elements of the 101 C Regiment were dispatched to the 5th VC Division as well. The 101 C Regiment and its previous controlling headquarters, the 10th NVA Division, have been dropped from the MACV Order of Battle.

11. Elements of the 5th VC Division have been active in southwestern III Corps harassing the RD program and attempting to disrupt the village and hamlet elections presently being conducted. The 274th VC Regiment has possibly been responsible for the upsurge of enemy activity in Long Khanh Province.

Improved Highway Situation

12. The trafficability of Route 20, an important artery between Saigon and Da Lat, has improved considerably in recent months although some security problems remain along the segment of the road traversing Lam Dong Province.

13. National Highway 20 has played a significant role in the economic life of Vietnam, serving as the principal route for the movement of condiments and

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produce from the city of Da Lat and the surrounding areas into Saigon. It also serves as the main route for rice and manufactured goods to move from Saigon to the northeast. In 1966 the lack of security and poor surface maintenance of the route caused considerable increases in the costs of goods carried by truck between these two cities.

14. US mission officials, after an inspection trip along Route 20 in early April, have reported that significant improvements, including new culverts and laterite road beds, have been made on the road between Xuan Loc in Long Khanh Province and Di Linh in Lam Dong Province. In addition, plans are in the offing to asphalt certain areas of the road between these two cities.

15. Trucks are now traversing the road from Da Lat to Saigon in a normal time of eight hours and produce prices have declined somewhat in Saigon, although not as much as had been expected. Security along the road in Long Khanh Province has improved with the elimination of Viet Cong tax collection points, the positioning of a US armored cavalry regiment headquarters at Xuan Loc, and the provision of an artillery fan covering the road into Lam Dong.

16. In Lam Dong Province, however, the general security situation has deteriorated over the past year. Enemy harassment has increased in the past few months. Money collected by the Communists in Lam Dong from the passing trucks and busses has yielded them an estimated minimum of one million piasters a day, and they have, therefore, chosen to leave the road generally open although they reportedly are able to close the highway at will. Communist forces have recently increased their "assessments" on tea, coffee, and lumber producers and have prohibited the shipment through the province of construction materials and any goods which appear to be destined for US use.

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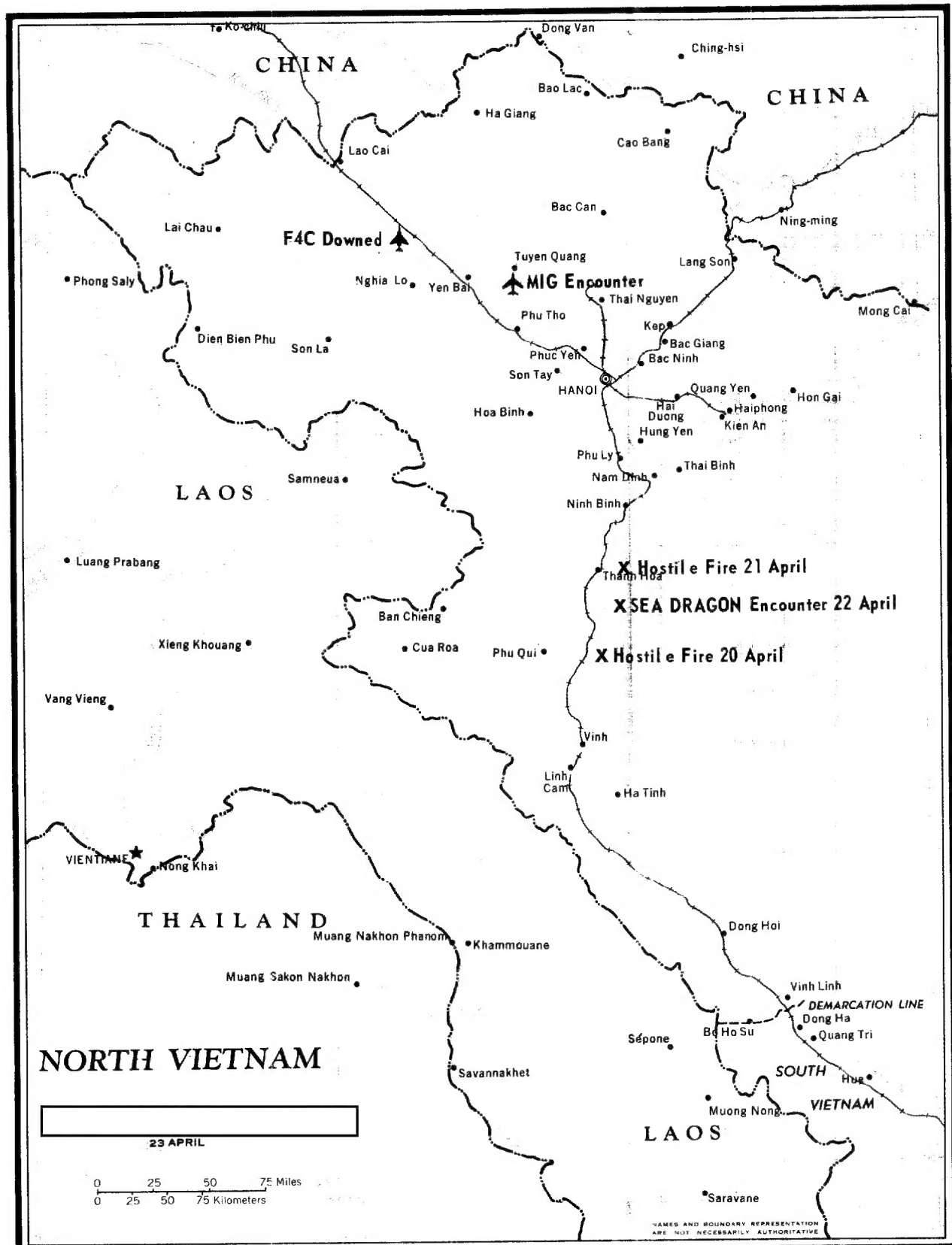
II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The secretary general of the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor (CVT), Tran Huu Quyen, strongly criticized the Ky administration during the CVT congress on 20 April.

2. Quyen's claims that the government's bad social and economic policies had created a false prosperity of luxury for the few and misery for the many received loud applause from the membership. Earlier, when many official visitors were present at the congress, CVT president Tran Quoc Buu had praised the "benevolent and constructive" attitude of the Ky government toward the labor movement. The cool response Buu received may make him more cautious in his attitude toward the Ky government in order to avoid undercutting his influential role in the union.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. While conducting SEA DRAGON operations an estimated 12 miles east-southeast of Thanh Hoa on 22 April, the US Navy destroyer Collett and the Australian destroyer Hobart sank or damaged 11 waterborne logistic craft.

2. It was just south of this area that the Collett and Hobart came under fire from coastal defense batteries on 20 April. On 21 April the ships again received hostile shore fire from enemy batteries approximately 11 miles northeast of Thanh Hoa.

3. A flight of three US Air Force (USAF) F-4C aircraft while participating in a 23 April strike against the Thai Nguyen Steel Plant in North Vietnam encountered two MIG-21 aircraft approximately 68 miles northwest of Hanoi. In the ensuing engagement one confirmed kill was made by US craft and another MIG-21 was probably downed. This same flight, while leaving the battle area, evaded three surface to air missiles (SAMs); however, immediately thereafter one F-4C was lost to anti-aircraft fire. During the strike on the steel plant, ten other MIGs were sighted in the area.

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